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THE RELATIONSHIP SYSTEMS OF THE WANGONDE AND WAHENGA TRIBES, NYASALAND.

By MEREDITH SANDERSON, M.R.C.S., F.R.G.S.

I.—THE WANGONDE.

1. THE Wangonde are a Bantu tribe inhabiting that part of Central Africa adjacent to the north-west shores of Lake Nyasa. They are a somewhat primitive people, as yet little contaminated by European civilization; they are intensely conservative and their customs differ from those of neighbouring tribes. As a result of this conservatism their system of relationship still bears, in its nomenclature, evidence of its evolution from exogamy in its most primitive form, and of all Nyasaland tribes the Wangonde have probably been least influenced by contact with others. In recent history they were victimised from time to time both by Arab slavers and by the Angoni, but neither appear to have left any trace of their domination. It should be mentioned, however, that the chieftainship was usurped some 10 (?) generations ago by an adventurer who, according to tradition, came from the north-west (towards Tanganyika) and whose descendants still form the ruling caste. It may be that some new customs were introduced at this time, though this is denied by the descendants of the old nobility, who still retain a large share of influence in tribal council.

2. *Definitions.*—ILUMBU = "brother"[1] to "sister," or "sister" to "brother." A man calls his elder "brother" *mkuluwangu*; a younger one *nung'una*: the same terms are used by a woman for her "sisters." All children of uncles and aunts are regarded as "brothers" and "sisters," including those of maternal uncle and of paternal aunt; those of father's elder "brother," of mother's elder "sister," and of mother's "brother," are called *wakulu*, irrespective of age.

The term *wamyitu* is often used, irrespective of sex, as alternative for "brother" or "sister"; its real meaning is rather "kinsman," and it may also be used for any relative or connection except the age-classes immediately above or below that of the speaker (*e.g.*, father or son), as it implies a degree of intimacy not permitted with those degrees. *Wamyitu* means "my" (lit. "our") "kinsman"; the second and third persons are *wamyinu* and *wamyao* respectively: there is no singular form.

[1] The use of inverted commas with English terms of relationship indicates that they are used in the full classificatory sense.

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601 MWINANGU ("my compeer"—other forms, *mwinako*, "thy" or "one's compeer," *mwinake*, *mwinitu*, *mwininu*, *mwinao*, "his," "our," "your," "their compeer"; plural, *winangu*, etc.). This term is used much as *wamyitu*, but its meaning is slightly different, as it definitely implies equality, and may be applied to a companion as opposed to a relative. When coupled to a term of relationship it has the meaning of "fellow," *e.g.*, *nkasi-mwinangu*, "my fellow-wife"; or it indicates an absence of formality in intercourse with that degree of relationship. Thus *mwisukulu-mwinangu* is always used in preference to *mwisukulu* by itself, and indicates that a grandson is treated as a "brother," a younger "brother," but an equal.

NDAMU is used by a man for men only and by a woman for women only. Of a man the term includes the husbands of his "sisters" and the "brothers" of all women who are his *wakasi*. A woman's *ndamu* are the wives of her "brothers" and the "sisters" of any man whom she calls *ndume*. (See *nkasi* and *ndume*.)

NKOGHO ("thy" or "one's *nko-*") is the husband of a daughter, or the parent, male or female, of a wife or husband. Seeing that a grand-daughter is called *nkasi*, it is possible that a man formerly married the daughter of his daughter, and called the husband of his daughter *nkogho* as a potential father-in-law.[1] If this be so, it would suggest that marriage with a son's daughter was not permitted, as the term *nkogho* may be used for either a man or a woman, and a son's wife is always called *nkamuana*, never *nkogho*. The use of the term *nkasi* for the daughter of a son may have arisen subsequently, by analogy, after marriage with a daughter's daughter had fallen into desuetude. A senior *nkogho* (*e.g.*, parent of wife) is usually addressed as *Tata* or *Yuwa*, and a son-in-law as *mwanangu*.

MWISUKULU = any grand-relation, male or female: it includes grandfather and grandmother, grandson and grand-daughter. A male *mwisukulu* is called *mwinangu* by a man and *ndume* by a woman; a female *mwisukulu* is called *nkasi* by a man and *mwinangu* by a woman. (See also para. 3 (4) below.)

NYENYA (*cf.* the ChiHenga word *nyenye* = "far") is a great grand-relation, male or female, senior or junior.

NKATINKATI similarly is a great-great-grand-relation of any kind.

NKASI includes wife of a "brother," uterine or otherwise; female *wisukulu*, including wives of "grandsons" and of "grandfathers," but excluding "grand-daughters" of wife; all "sisters" of a wife; daughters of a wife's "brothers"; wives of "grandsons" by marriage, and the "grandmothers" of a wife; wife of maternal uncle; and, of course, own wife.

Similarly NDUME includes husband of a "sister"; male *wisukulu* including husbands of "grand-daughters" and of "grandmothers"; all "brothers" of a husband; sons of all "sisters" of a husband; husband of father's "sister";

[1] Mrs. Seligman called to my notice a similar possibility among the WaYao, and I am indebted to her for the suggestion.

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601 husbands of "grand-daughters" by marriage (but not "grandsons" by marriage); the "grandfathers" of a husband; and own husband.

TATA includes own father, his "brothers" and "sisters," and the husband of father's "sister"; also husband of mother's sister. By courtesy the term is used for all "fathers" of a wife or husband (instead of *nkogho*), or to any superior in station or age, whether related or not.

YUWA (mother) includes own mother, her "brothers" and "sisters" the wives of the father's "brothers" and the wives of a woman's maternal uncle. The term may also be used for the mothers of a wife or husband, or as a mere term of respect.

These terms (TATA and YUWA) are used only in speaking of one's own fathers or mothers, the possessive adjective, "my" or "our," being invariably omitted. For other persons, the old Bantu words WISE and NYINA are substituted; *e.g.*, *ghuso, uwise, uwisemwe, uwisao* ("thy," "his," "your," "their father"), plurals *awatata, awauso, awawise*, etc. ("my" or "our," "thy," "his fathers," etc.). So *unyoko, unyina, unyinemwe, unyinawo* ("thy," "his," "your," "their mother"), plurals *awayuwa, awanyoko, awanyina*, etc. ("my" or "our," "thy," "his mother").

MWANA = son or daughter, including, of course, those of "brothers" and "sisters," and of wife.

NKAMWANA, obviously derived from *nkazi wa mwana* ("wife of a son"), may be used by either a man or a woman for that degree of relationship.

MWEGHANISI (= *mu-egha-na-uswe*, "marry with us," from *kwegha*, "to marry") or KITWASI (= *Ki-twala-na-uswe*, "marry with us," from *kutwala*, "to marry"). [177] The former is said to be a *Kinyakyusa* word,[1] now in general use, and the latter the old *Kingonde* word; either may be used to denote a paramour of one's wife, and as a result the term *mwinangu* is usually added when referring to a husband of the speaker's potential wife, which is its special meaning, in order to deprive it of any suggestion of offence.

NKASI-MWINANGU ("my fellow-wife") is the corresponding term used by a woman for the wife of a potential husband, but it is not generally used among the potential wives of a man, as such. The actual wives of a man, however, refer to each other by means of this term, and to their husband's potential wives.

NASENGE denotes a father's sister of either a man or a woman, and reciprocally a "brother's" child of a woman. It probably has reference to the right of marriage possessed by a man with the daughter of his wife's "brother." (See para. 3 (3) below.)

MWIPWA includes mother's brother and sister's son or daughter of a man, and mother's brother of a woman. A woman calls her sister's son *ndume*. (See para. 3 (6) below.)

[1] The Wanyakyusa are a tribe racially allied to the Wankonde, and inhabiting neighbouring territory.

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Mwiko is very nearly a translation of the word *tabu*, and may be used either 601
of things or of forbidden degrees of relationship.

3. The following points are noteworthy :—

(1) The wife of a "brother," whether older or younger, uterine or not, is called 601
by the same term (*nkasi*) as a wife. I am informed that sexual intercourse, 602
though not countenanced, is not uncommon, and such cases are apt to 837
be treated leniently should they come to (native) court. This might be regarded as evidence of former "group marriages," but it should be noted that a man's first heir is his brother, who succeeds to the wives in common with the rest of the "property."

The same term (*ndume*) is used by a woman for the "brothers" 601
of her husband as for the husband himself, and their wives are *wakasi-winake* (= "her fellow-wives").

(2) The "sisters" of a wife are also called *nkasi*. The husband of the eldest 601
of a family has a prior right to marry her uterine sisters, and a semi- 595
right to her other "sisters"; such marriages are very common. Any man who marries a woman to whom another has a prior right becomes *mweghanisi* (or *kitwasi*) to the ousted one. (See Definitions.) Reciprocally a woman calls her "sister's" husband *ndume*, even after her marriage to another.

(3) A man has the right to marry the daughter of his wife's "brother" as 582
among the Thonga,[1] and the wife of the wife's "brother" is called 601
nkogho (see Definitions); the son of the wife's "brother" is often called *ndamu* instead of *mwana*. There is a special term for a father's sister, which is reciprocally used by a woman for her "brother's" daughter; the term *nkasi-mwinangu* (= "my fellow-wife") does not appear to be used by her unless and until her husband actually marries the girl. This special term is *nasenge*, and it can hardly be mere coincidence that it so closely resembles the Nandi term *senget* for father's sister[2] (*na-* being a common Bantu prefix, usually honorific, and, on the other hand, the terminal *-t* merely formative).

A woman calls the son of her husband's "sister" *ndume*. (See para. (6) below.)

(4) All "grand-daughters," except those by marriage, are called *nkasi*, but marriage has never been allowed within living memory; the husband of these "grand-daughters" are called *mweghanisi* (*kitwasi*). A "grandson" is not called *ndamu* but (*mwisukulu*) *mwinangu* (= "my compeer");

[1] B. Z. Seligman, "The relationship systems of the Nandi, Masai and Thonga, *Man*, April, 1917, 46 (quoting Junod).

[2] Seligman, *loc. cit.*, quoting Hollis, "The Nandi."

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his wife is called *nkasi*, like the wife of a "brother," not *nkogho*. This appears to be the result of the law that a man may have to marry his "grandmothers." (See para. 5.)

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Similarly a woman calls her "grandson" *ndume*, and his wife *nkasi-mwinangu*.

No distinction is made between the offspring of a "son" and that of a "daughter," either by a man or a woman.

"Grand-daughters" by marriage are not called *nkasi* by a man, nor are "grandsons" by marriage called *ndume* by a woman: the term *mwisukulu-mwinangu* is used in either case. It is of interest to note, however, that the wives and husbands of these relations are called *nkasi* and *ndume* respectively, which is evidently a relic of the period when the whole tribe was divided into two classes, marriageable and unmarriageable: since a "grandchild" by marriage belonged to the latter class, his or her spouse must be included in the former.

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(5) All "grandmothers" are termed *nkasi*, except perhaps the sisters of the paternal grandfather; some say that these should be classed as "sister," as the sister of one's *mwinangu* (grandfather), because *nkasi* would not be polite to the *nasenge* of one's father. Others deny this and include all grandmothers as *nkasi*, and it is doubtful whether the objection is not modern. The same applies to the "grandmothers" of a wife.

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A man often has to marry his "grandmothers" on the death of his "grandfather," though if the latter were a chief or a rich man the heir would probably marry them as part of the property. The rule appears to be that it is the duty of any man to marry his "grandmothers" if they are destitute.

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A woman calls all her "grandfathers" *ndume*, though actual marriage is not permitted. It is difficult to say whether this is due to analogy with the relationship of a man to his "grandmother," or is the corollary of that to his "grand-daughter." Since marriage with a "grand-daughter" is not uncommon in other tribes, it may be that it was originally the reason for a woman calling her grandfather *ndume* among the Wangonde, but that the persistence of the terminology after such a marriage came to be regarded as incestuous is partly due to analogy.

As a result of the similarity of relationship between grandparents and grandchildren the same term *mwisukulu* is used for both. There was formerly a special term for grandparents (*mbuya*), but it is now obsolete.

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(6) The relationship between mother's "brother" and "sister's" son is peculiar, in that the term is used reciprocally (*mwipwa*). A man calls the wife of his

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maternal uncle *nkasi*, and she calls him *ndume*. As a sister's son comes very low down in the table of succession, this cannot be due to their prospective relationship should the maternal uncle die, and it may be that the relationship of husband's sister's son is (or was) regarded as analogous to that of wife's brother's daughter. On the other hand, if the father of X exercises his right to marry his wife's brother's daughter, this girl, from being the "sister" of X, becomes his "mother," and her mother (the wife of X's maternal uncle) becomes his "grandmother" and therefore his *nkasi*.

(7) Cross-cousins are classed as "brothers" and "sisters," and all first cousins are, therefore, unmarriageable.

(8) It is of interest to note that a kind of marriage by capture is still in vogue among the Wangonde. It may be performed either with or without the consent of the woman, but, except in the case of a woman to whom the man has a right by relationship, her father's sanction is necessary, and at least part of the dowry must be paid beforehand: usually, the woman is aware that the marriage has been proposed.

The bridegroom, assisted by some friends, either lies in wait for the woman, on the way to the water-supply for instance, or decoys her out of the village by means of a spurious message, and carries her off to his home. Her relatives would be bound in honour to rescue her if the bridegroom were so maladroit as to make it impossible for them to affect ignorance of the abduction. It is said that the marriage is sometimes consummated by force with the assistance of the companions of the bridegroom: in any case, a small present to the girl personally is necessary before consummation.

4. *Succession.*—The order of succession is liable to modification if the legal heir is considered unsuitable for any reason. The relationships are put in the following order of precedence:—

(1) Younger brother by same father and mother.
(2) Younger brother by same father and different mother.
(3) Any younger "brother."

Note.—It would be considered *infra dig.* for an elder "brother" to take the name of his junior, so that, although he has a prior right to the property, he would appoint a younger "brother" to the name. In such a case he may choose which of the "wives" of the deceased he likes, in addition to the cattle.

(4) Eldest surviving son (own begetting).
(5) Eldest son of elder brother (by the same father).
(6) Eldest son of younger brother (by the same father).

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(7) Eldest *mwipwa*, i.e., eldest son of eldest sister.
(8) Eldest son of a younger sister.
(9) Eldest grandson of the father's elder brother.
(10) Eldest grandson of the father's younger brother.
(11) Eldest grandson of the father's sister.
(12) Eldest grandson of the mother's sister.
(13) Eldest grandson of the mother's brother.
(14) Eldest grandson of the eldest brother by the same mother (not father).
(15) Eldest son of own son or daughter.
(16) Eldest grandson of a younger brother.
(17) Eldest grandson of a sister.

5. All *nkogho* must be "feared," i.e., avoided on all occasions; a woman must cover her head if unavoidably in their presence. These rules do not differ greatly from those found in other parts of the world, except that a man's "fear" of his wife's mother is greatly lessened after the birth of a child to the couple. They have to be much more strictly observed by a woman than by a man.

II.—THE WAHENGA.

1. The term WaHenga is somewhat loosely applied to a group of Bantu peoples living to the south of the Wangonde, and is often used as synonymous with WaTumbuka, Wakamanga, and WaPoka. It is adopted here for convenience, though properly only applicable to those living in the valley of the S. Rukuru River, often called the Henga Valley; the word *henga* means "chief" in some Bantu languages, but the valley is said to have been named after a chief who settled in it.

The information detailed here as to relationships has been derived from natives whose birthplace is the Nkhamanga plains to the north of the S. Rukuru River and west of the "Henga Valley," but as far as has been ascertained it applies equally to the rest of the group. These people prefer to be called *Wakamanga*, and they have a tradition that their forefathers came from the East across the Lake (Nyasa); they are now, however, so mixed by inter-marriage with the other small groups mentioned above that the practice of including them all under the term WaHenga has been followed here.

2. *Definitions.*—MDUMBU = "brother" to "sister," or "sister" to "brother." An elder "brother" is MKULU, a younger one MKUNG'UNA, of a man: the same terms are used by a woman of her "sisters." The children of the father's elder brother are called WAKULU irrespective of age, as also those of the mother's elder sister.

MWANAMNYANE ("my fellow-child," other forms MWANAMNYINU, MWANAMNYAKE, etc., "your" "his fellow-child"). This term is often used as equivalent to "brother" or "sister" by either a man or a woman.